Library Application Software Packages Awareness among Librarians in University Libraries in North Central Nigeria

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Abstract
The study is an examination of library oriented software packages awareness among librarians in university libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which librarians are aware of library application software packages in university libraries. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population of the is 57 comprising librarians and system analysts. Data was collected through structured questionnaire titled "Library Application Software Packages Awareness Questionnaire (LASPAQ)". A return rate of 44 (77.2%) was recorded. Data collected were presented in tabular form and analyzed with the use of frequencies and mean. Findings revealed that librarians are aware of library application software packages such as Tinlib, X-Lib, Micro CDS/ISIS, Geenstone, KOHA, Dspace, MINISIS, Mastalib, AFW, Bookwhere, Lib+, GLAS as well BASIS packages to a fairly great extent. The study further reveals that librarians in these libraries are informed about library oriented software packages through checking of product reviews, browsing the web, workshop, seminars and discussing the software with those who use and are trained in it. The study concludes that librarians in university libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria are aware of the packages. The study recommends that librarians who are not yet aware of library oriented software packages should endeavor to do so by either interacting with those who are trained in it or those who use it.

Keywords: *Library, Application Software Packages, Awareness, Librarians, University Libraries*

1.0 Introduction
1.1 Concept of Automation Software Packages

It is no longer argumentative to stress that application software packages otherwise called library oriented software packages are steadily growing in fields of human endeavor. Application software packages are set of program designed to carry out specific or set of functions. In librarianship, application software packages are on the steady increase and are properly recognized due to their sustainable and usable characteristics such as development and customization. These

packages have come a long way in a relatively short time. By the end of 1985 according to Mathews as cited by Nwachukwu, (1998), there were over 300 micro software packages available for libraries, an increase of 30 percent over the previous years. Library application software packages are instruments for creating, storing, managing and disseminating timely information to clientele. Library oriented software packages are application software. According to Sambe (2012) library oriented software packages are set of detailed designed and coded machine readable instructions for effective performance of the library and information services. For the purpose of this work, library oriented software packages are set of instructions or programme designed by a programmer to enable the effective performance of library operations or functions. They incorporate several programs and they often cover a wide range of functions. Library oriented software packages are also referred to as automation software packages. In this wise Adeniyi (2006) sees library automation software package as management software customized for document storage and retrieval and related to data management tasks in a library. They are economical because the investment cost for the initial creation and later maintenance is spread over several users. They are also documented, including detailed system specifications, system timing and user manuals.

Library application software packages are categorized into two: customized software and off the shelf software packages. Customized software packages are packages that are written with specific library operations in mind and the purchasing library can only automate those operations covered by the software (Tiamiyu, 2000). They enable the automation of one or more library sub-systems. On the other hand, off the shelf software packages are in-house developed software packages which are tailored to the requirement of the library. They are often amalgam of the task-oriented software that is customized for the library activity. These packages are available in the market. Some of these packages include TINLIB, Micro CDS/SIS, X-lib, Greenstone, Lib+, Alice for Windows, BookWhere, KOHA, Mastalib, etc.

The fore going discussion therefore means that librarians should be aware of the existence of the packages so that provision will be made for the acquisition and use of the packages in the libraries. Library application software packages awareness involves having a fore knowledge or experience about the existence and the impact or positive influence of library application software packages. Librarians who are the potential users of library application software packages must be enriched with the knowledge of software programmes and their usefulness in order to increase the usage of the facilities (software packages). Lwoga *et tal* (2012) in support of this disclosed that this can be achieved through promotional programmes which include electronic media resources such as radio, television and website; print media such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters and notice boards and organization of workshops, seminars, conferences and public lectures. Library oriented software packages awareness can also be created through the inclusion of courses into the students' curricula for training and retraining of future and practicing librarians.

However, it seems to be like university libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria may not be aware of the existing packages and this may pose a very big challenge in the provision and utilization of the packages in the University libraries. The University libraries under study are Francis Sulemanu Idachaba Library of the Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi (Federal), Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library of the Federal University of Technology, Minna (Federal),

Benue State University Library, Makurdi (State), and Chief Ason Bur Learning Resource Centre of the University of Mkar, Mkar (Private) all located in the North central Nigeria. It is in view of these that the researcher deems it necessary to evaluate the extent of librarians' awareness of library application software packages in University libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Library oriented software packages constitute a vital force in the management of library resources. They enable librarians to display their technical skills of choosing resources and managing resources licenses, collecting and digitizing archival materials and maintaining repositories. They enable libraries to create multiple databases for cataloguing separate collections, offer virtual reference services. This implies that university libraries should harness the value of the existing packages and embrace it to advance its work and services.

In spite of the existence and value of library oriented packages, it has been observed that university libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria may or may not be aware of the packages. This may result to non provision of the packages. The non provision of the packages may affect the use of the packages or access to remote electronic databases, thus making a wider range of services and product available to library users. This may in turn discourage users when they do not access remote databases to satisfy their information needs. It is against this backdrop therefore, that this research is set to evaluate the extent of librarians' awareness of library oriented software packages in university libraries in North Central Nigeria.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which librarians are aware of library oriented software packages in university libraries under study. Specifically, the study intends to:

I. Determine the extent to which librarians are awareness of library oriented software packages in university libraries

ii. Ascertain the methods of informing librarians about library oriented software packages.

2.0 Literature Review

The term software is generally defined as programme or programs and/or data. This statement may be abbreviated according to Ikekeonwu (2006) as: Software = Program(s) [+Data] where optional components are enclosed in a rectangular bracket. In this study software is a set of detailed and coded instructions that control the operations of a computer system. Library oriented software packages are therefore set of detailed, designed, and coded machine readable instructions that enable a computer to carry out effective library and information services or operations. Adeniyi (2006) opines that library automation package is management software customized for document storage and retrieval and related data management task in a library. Nwalo (1999) argues that "without software, the computer can neither understand nor obey instructions; it would be like a mere log of wood". This is because without software, computer would not perform the task that we associate it with. Ugah (2005) adds that majority of library specific software are culturally specific and simply replicate what is currently being practiced in libraries. The question now is that are librarians aware of the existence of these packages? It is difficult to answer as a good number of libraries are seemed not to be utilizing these software packages in carrying out their functions.

However, it is very important to note that, library profession is now at a crossroad as traditional library services appear to be on the

decline while technology-based services are on the rise as a result of the adoption of software management and service provision of libraries (Ukachi, 2012). Technological change is posing a particular challenge to librarians in developing countries. Librarians in developed countries moved quickly to learn and adopt new information technologies (Ramzan, 2004). It is in view of this development that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) was introduced in libraries to help in performing library functions and provide innovative user services. Therefore, in the course of achieving library application software packages expertise, one is exposed to the available facilities and their usage increases awareness and literacy. Therefore, librarians gained knowledge of new technologies through continuing education programs, professional training, and revisions to library school curricula, which helped them benefit from the new technologies. Their libraries became equipped with appropriate hardware and software. However, the story in developing nations is quite different. Ramzan (2004) has studied the situation in Pakistan and other developing countries. He observed that librarians in Pakistan were not prepared to embrace the changes forced on them by new technologies; and that most of them were uncertain about ICT applications in their libraries and benefits for their organizations, because they had little knowledge about ICT. The problems associated with this lack of knowledge are also discussed by Khan (1995) and Mahmood (1999).Writing on Library and Information Service - outreach Support and Partnership Working, Leeds (2009) informs that in order to properly support the Board maker software service for families within the library, library staff has received autism awareness training from the STARS and SLT teams, as well as training in Board maker. According to the source, autism awareness training was delivered to library staff partners via a half-day session for 20 members of staff who then in turn cascaded the training down to others. A further training session on using the software was delivered to staff including a session on why the software is important for parents of children with autism. Again, this training was cascaded by library staff. It has sparked an increased awareness of autism amongst library staff and of the challenges it can bring for families trying to successfully communicate with their children. This has resulted in a shifting culture within the library service and a commitment to deliver better and more appropreate services for families of children and young people with communication and learning difficulties. Finally, though Ukachi, Nwachukwu and Onuoha (2014) opine that "library automation and the use of open source software are relevant for achieving optimal library effectiveness at a minimal cost"; the issue of awareness is yet to be well emphasized. In summarizing the literature review, it was discovered that the extent of library application software packages among librarians in general was not adequately covered most especially in university libraries in North Central Nigeria. This creates a gap in the literature of the subject that need urgent attention to bridge. It is against this background that the authors therefore embark on the study of this kind to bridge the gap which has been created as a result of the absence of studies on library application software packages awareness among librarians in university libraries in North Central Nigeria.

3.0 Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was made up of fifty seven respondents comprising of librarians and system analysts. Questionnaire titled "Library Application Software Packages Awareness

Questionnaire" was used for the study. Questionnaire was administered to respondents in their offices for the purpose of data collection and collected within an interval of one month by the researchers with the help of three trained research assistants who were trained for the purpose of how and who to administer the questionnaire. A return rate of 44 (77.2%) was recorded. Data collected were presented in tabular form and analyzed with the use of frequencies and mean. Any mean between the mean range of 2.50 to 4.00 and above was considered as fairly great extent or accepted while any mean

4.0 Findings

Table 1: Extent of Librarians' Awareness of Library Oriented Software Packages in University Libraries

S/N	Items	VGE	FGE	SE	NE	$\overline{X}$	Decision
1	Tinlib	34	7	-	-	3.82	FGE
2	X-lib	28	4	-	2	3.77	FGE
3	Micro CDS/ISIS	25	18	-	-	3.58	FGE
4	Mastalib	30	8	4	2	3.50	FGE
5	Koha	29	77	3	3	3.47	FGE
6	Greenstone	28	10	4	2	3.45	FGE
7	Dspace	15	28	1	0	3.29	FGE
8	AFW	20	15	3	6	3.11	FGE
9	MINISIS	5	32	1	4	3.02	FGE
10	BookWhere	8	29	5	3	3.00	FGE
11	Lib Plus (+)	10	24	2	5	2.95	FGE
12	GLAS	2	30	8	0	2.85	FGE
13	BASIS	4	22	17	0	2.69	FGE

The results obtained in table 1 above reveals mean responses of respondents on the extent of librarians awareness of library application software packages in university libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria.

Table 2: Methods through which Librarians are informed About Library Application Software Packages

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\overline{X}$	Decision
1	Through checking of product reviews	37	6	1	0	3.81	Accepted
2	Through browsing the web	27	65	1	0	3.78	Accepted
3	Through workshops	21	7	0	1	3.65	Accepted
4	Through conferences	20	10	7	1	3.28	Accepted
5	Through seminars	4	24	2	0	3.06	Accepted
6	Through discussing the software with those who use or are trained in it	4	6	19	0	2.48	Rejected
7	Through reading of scholarly articles in scholarly journals	1	9	O	11	2.00	Rejected

Data in Table 2 above show the methods through which librarians are informed about library application software packages in university libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria.

4.1 Discussion of Findings/ Conclusion

Findings of this study show that librarians are aware of library application software packages. Prominent among these packages are Tinlib, X-lib, Micro CDS/ISISI, Mastalib, KOHA, Greenstone, Dspace, Alice for window (AFW), MINISIS, Bookwhere, LIB+, GLAS and BASIS. The findings disagree with the findings of Ukachi (2012) who noted that most librarians in Nigeria have limited awareness on the availability of the varying open source software. Thus, librarians are aware of library application software packages to a fairly great extent.

Librarians need to be aware of library application software packages in order to cope with current challenges imposed on them by ICT. There are different ways of informing librarians about library application software packages. The study revealed that librarians knowledge of the packages is derived through checking of product reviews, browsing the web, attending workshop and seminars. This is in line with Lwoga, *et al* (2012) who discloses that the knowledge or awareness of ICT which library application software packages is part of can be achieved through promotional programmes which include electronic media resources such as radio, television and website; print media such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters and notice boards and organization of workshops, seminars, conferences and public lectures. Library application software packages awareness can also be created through the inclusion of courses into the students' curricula. Thus, librarians are aware of library application packages through various methods such as checking of product review, browsing the web, workshops, conferences and seminars.

Conclusion

Knowledge of library application software packages is a bold step towards its effective utilization. It is based on this that librarians must be aware of different kinds of packages through different methods so as to enhance their utilization for the effective performance of library functions. The implication is that, lack of awareness of library application software packages among librarians may affect the decision to adopt, train and use library application software packages in university libraries. This may go a long way in affecting the effectiveness of the services rendered by university libraries in support of the objectives of parent institutions thereby giving a negative impression about the library particularly in this jet age. The study therefore recommends that librarians should also be involved in discussing software issues with those who use or are trained in it given special training on the packages available to enable them utilize them effectively. In case of those who are not yet aware of the packages, they should endeavor to interact with those who are trained in it or those who use it. This will enable them to be more knowledgeable not only about the packages in particular but information and communication technologies in particular. This is because librarians who render services to the clients need to be knowledgeable about library application software packages in particular and ICT in general so that they can cope with the current challenges that will be imposed on them by new developments in librarianship and library clienteles.

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